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THE

CLAIMS OF MISSIONS

ON THE

LIBERALITY OF CHRISTIANS.

A

SERMON,

PREACHED IN BEHALF OF THE FEMALE MISSIONARY SOCIETY

OF THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN ITHACA,

August 4th, 1839.

BY REV. J. CROSS.

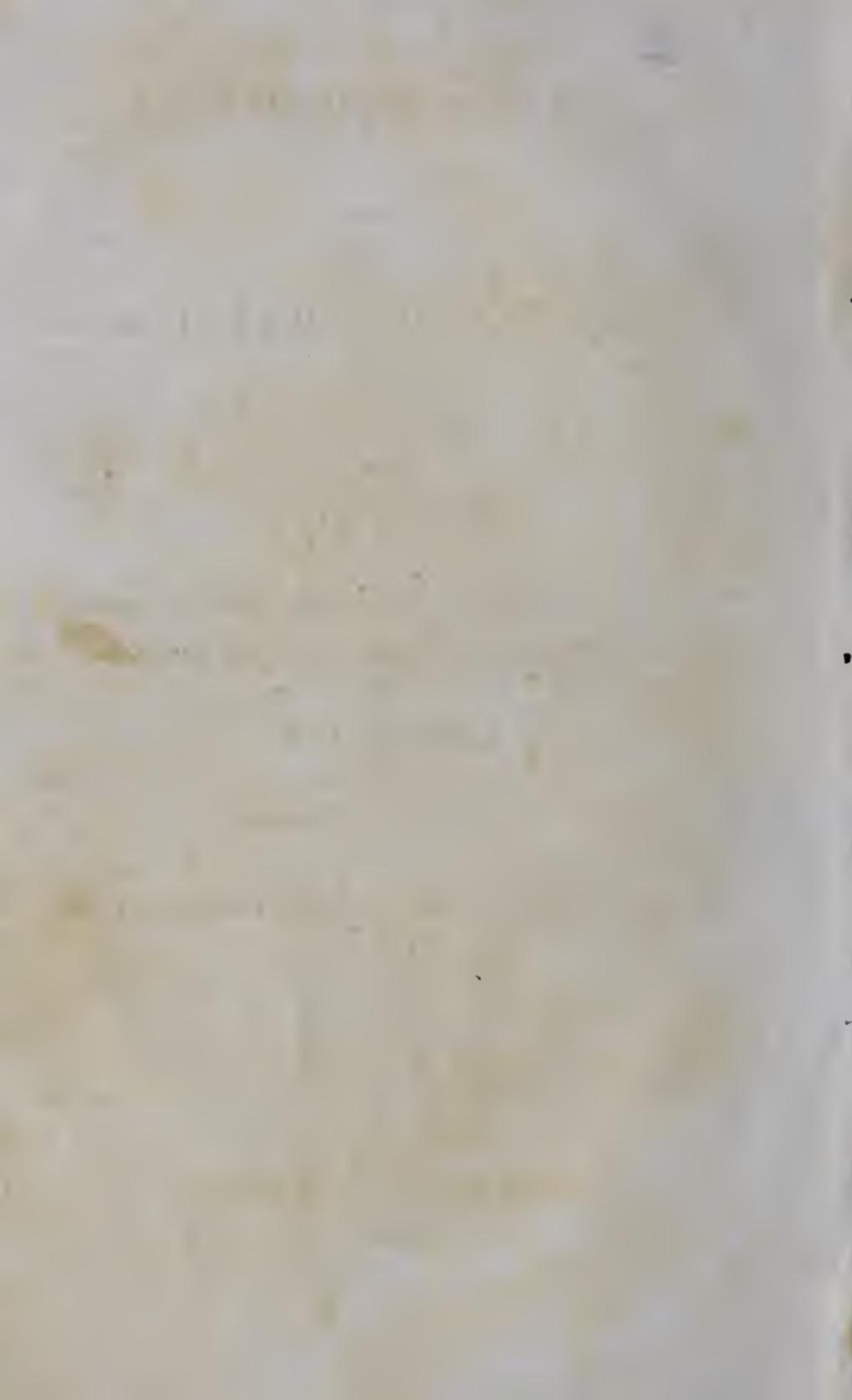
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SERMON.

"**T**AKE ye from among you an offering unto the Lord ; he that is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord."—Ex. xxxv, v.

God commonly effects his purposes through some visible agency. This method of operation is selected, not from any necessity on His part; for the true notion of omnipotence is, that it can accomplish its own pleasure, either with means, or without: but Jehovah "has still wrought by means, since first He made the world;" and doubtless for wise and benevolent ends, which can never be fully known to mortals, till they have witnessed the incipient developments of eternity.

Thus in building the tabernacle. He who had changed the waters of the Nile to blood, and divided the Red Sea before His people, manifestly might have reared for Himself a habitation, independently of human instrumentality: but He chose, in His sovereign pleasure, that all Israel—priest and people—male and female—should be "workers together with Him" in this sublime service. And mark the liberality, the promptness, and the zeal, with which they engaged in the undertaking. The men wrought with their hands; the skilful women spun goat's hair; the elders and officers gave up their precious jewels; all who were wise-hearted in Israel labored to erect the building; and every individual felt it a privilege and an honor, to be able to present something toward the holy place. No one was coerced; "their hearts stirred them up, their spirits made them willing;" each gladly contributed his portion, and "brought a free-will offering unto the Lord;" and so great was their zeal, that Moses was under the necessity of making a proclamation, to cheek the super-abundance of their munificence.

Christians, here is your example. The Jewish dispensation has passed away, and the shadow has given place to the substance. The christian church is pre-eminently "God's building"—the habitation of the "Holy One of Israel," pre-figured by that which

Moses erected—the tabernacle of the “*better covenant*,” vocal with the anthems of the *living* cherubim, filled with the glory of the *incarnate* Shekinah, and open alike to gentile and to jew—not, like the former, to be taken down and carried about in the wilderness, but to remain stationary and permanent through all time—into which the nations shall press, through the blood of one sufficient sacrifice ; every man a priest, entering the “most holy place” with the incense of prayer and song. The building was long since begun. Eighteen centuries ago, the “prophet like unto Moses” came down from heaven, to lay its foundations, deep and broad and strong, and of surpassing glory. Then He ascended up on high, leaving twelve apostles—“wise master builders”—to superintend the work, and a vast number of disciples to assist in its execution. They wrought, like the re-builders of desolated Jerusalem, every man with his weapon by his side. They stood upon the “chief corner stone” laid by Jehovah, and “built thereon gold, silver, precious stones ;” and their work was tried by fire and flood, but “it fell not, for it was founded upon a rock.” The gates of hell could not prevail against it ; and the storm that howled around it, only brought materials for the edifice ; and the ocean that rushed upon it, cast up a thousand gems for its decoration ; and the apostles had scarcely fallen asleep, when “the mountain of the Lord’s house was exalted above the tops of the hills, and the kings of the earth brought their treasures into it.” And now, “the habitation of God is with men,” and He is calling upon christians to come, in the strength of their united piety and concentrated benevolence, to increase the glory of His tabernacle—to enlarge its dimensions, and spread out its curtains, till its canopy shall cover tho world. “Ye men of Israel, help!” Here is work for all. None are uninterested, and none should be idle. Ministers of the gospel, and private members of the church, and woman with all her sympathies, and childhood with all its tenderness, may here find enough to employ their hands and their hearts—enough suited to their respective capacities, and congenial with their peculiar affections : and if christians would unitedly put forth their efforts to extend and beautify the place of Jehovah’s glory, they would soon see “the ransomed of the Lord, coming to Zion with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads”—the brawny slave, the red man

of the forest, the savage tribes of Africa, the frozen children of the pole, flocking to "the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not men."

It is not the duty of every christian, personally to carry the gospel to the heathen. Many could not go, if they would ; and many would not succeed in the effort, should they embark in the enterprise. But all are obligated to do *something* in the cause of missions ; and the most direct method of rendering any efficient aid, is by consecrating to this object a portion of your earthly substance. We shall therefore attempt to advocate the claims of God and a perishing world upon the liberality of christians ; and by exhibiting these claims as the claims of justice, and the claims of gratitude, and the claims of religion, and the claims of interest, and the claims of benevolence, we shall urge the exhortation—"Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord ; he that is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord."

The claims of the cause of missions are the claims of JUSTICE. There is but one independent being, the source of existence and of blessing to the universe. All creatures, terrestial and celestial, hang upon Deity ; worm and man and angel receiving perpetual supplies from the same inexhaustible fountain, and every tenant of every system appealing continually to the common Parent to preserve it from extinction. There is not the order of creatures, material or immaterial, that stands not every instant indebted for every thing to God. There is not the order of creatures—however rare its endowments—however majestic its possessions—that could dispense for one moment with communications from the fullness of the Almighty, or be thrown for one moment upon its own resources without immediate destruction. And if unfallen spirits, moving in their power and their purity, owe every thing to Jehovah ; what are the obligations of a creature who cannot expect a single breath of air, nor a single ray of light, nor a single particle of food, only on the ground of a new and special arrangement which Heaven has made for the fallen—a creature whose every possession is stamped with the sign of the cross, and sprinkled with the blood to which Divinity gave preciousness !

Let me appeal to every hearer. "What hast thou, that thou didst not receive?" "The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof." "The gold and the silver are His," and the "cattle upon a thousand hills." He created them at first, and therefore has a prior and supreme property in them. He continues them in existence, and is thus constantly asserting His original right, and establishing a new claim to dominion over them. "It is the Lord, that giveth thee power to get wealth." Whatever you have is loaned by Him, not alienated from Him—deposited with you as its steward, not vested in you as its master. Jehovah holds you accountable for its improvement; and requires you, by its use, to glorify God, and benefit mankind, as far as is compatible with the measure of your trust, and the period for which you may retain it. The steward may fancy that his lord is absent, and unbelief may whisper that he will never return, and the unfaithful servant may burn the writings and forget the terms of the commission; but the master is constantly keeping a strict account, and the dread day of reckoning must inevitably come, and it shall soon be said to every one of us,—“give an account of thy stewardship, for thou mayest be no longer steward.”

If, then, our wealth belongs to another, shall we withhold from Him His own? Shall we “rob God,” by appropriating solely to our own gratification what ought to be devoted to the Divine glory? Yet many refuse even a small portion of the *interest* to Him who has loaned them the *principal*. Will Jehovah suffer this with impunity? Will they not be found guilty of sacrilege, when He comes to “require His own with usury?” Then hasten to acknowledge His right! Place all you possess at His feet; dedicate it to His service, and inscribe it with His name! “Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; he that is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord.”

The claims of the cause of missions are the claims of GRATITUDE. Is a child indebted to an affectionate parent? Think of the kindness and condescension of your Heavenly Father. He has placed you in a world that is full of His goodness—the treasury of the material universe. The fulness of the ocean, the amplitude of the atmosphere, the plenitude of the solar light, com-

bine to attest the infinite exuberance of his bounty, and rebuke the guilty covetousness of his creatures. What shall you render to a benefactor who "daily loadeth you with his benefits," and "crowneth you with loving kindnesses and tender mercies?"

But why tarry we to admire the wonders of God's creative goodness and providential care? The universe is crowded with proofs of His beneficence; but there is one proof which infinitely transcends them all. "God so loved the world, that He gave His son" for its redemption. "Herein is love"—love into whose mystery the adoring angels cannot penetrate! "God so loved the world"—we cannot tell how much; it is an ocean which we have no line to fathom, a sum which we have no arithmetic to compute: but He "so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son;" and with His son, He has "freely given us all things;" and with His son, he offers us Himself. "Unspeakable gift!"—Enumerate His perfections: recollect His ineffable attributes; think of the splendors of His throne, the vastness of His dominion, the angelic orders of His Kingdom, the eternal ocean of felicity reserved for His people. Meditate on this amazing goodness, till your hearts grow too large for earth: reach after these proffered riches, till the world shall fall forgotten from your grasp. "How much owest thou unto my Lord?" He who for *your* sake gave His *son*, asks you for *His* sake to give your *money*; He who poured forth His fulness into the impoverished treasury of humanity, requires you to pour forth the streams of your gratitude into the broad channel of benevolence. Is there any proportion between a Deity possessed, and all the treasures of time? yet He condescends to regard the smallest fraction of your earthly substance as an expression of gratitude for the gift.

Gratitude to Christ, as well as gratitude to the Father, should produce in us a spirit of liberality. Christ is man's best friend,—"He loved us, and gave Himself for us." He redeemed us by His precious blood—

"A price all price beyond!"

All your blessings are purchased blessings. Will you refuse to glorify Him in their use? Can you behold such a friend hungering and thirsting at your gate, and not put forth a hand to his re-

lief? If you are disposed to inquire,—“Lord, when saw we thee in want, and neglected to minister to thy comfort?” behold Him suffering in His slighted cause—behold Him languishing in the privations and afflictions of His ministers among the heathen—behold him perishing in the purchase of His blood, who, in Africa and India and Oregon, are living without God, and dying without hope! and hear Him say,—“Inasmuch as ye have done it not to these, ye have done it not to me!” Should one of the veterans of the American revolution visit your door for a cup of water and a morsel of bread, and exhibit the wounds he won in fighting for your freedom from the yoke of a foreign power, who of you would suffer him to plead in vain? who of you would not be more than the good Samaritan to the venerable stranger? And shall the great “captain of your salvation,” who met the combined legions of “the power of darkness,” and fell weltering in His gore in the fierce struggle for your salvation—shall *He* stand at your threshhold, a weeping wounded beggar, unpittied and unsupplied, “till His head is wet with the dew, and His locks with the drops of the night?” “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; that, though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might be rich.” Ye know the elevation from which He stooped—the depth to which He descended. Ye know for whom He came into the world, and wept His way from Bethlehem to Calvary. Ye know the grand design of His sacrifices and His sufferings—to rescue the perishing—to raise the dwellers on earth to habitations in heaven. “Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ”—it is the wonder of three worlds—it is the theme of the universe. Shall it produce no emotions in your hearts? Will you withhold from Him any thing that you possess? He sacrificed *all* for *you*—can you sacrifice *nothing* for *Him*? He gave *Himself* for your *redemption*—can you not give your *property* for His *glory*? Go, stand by the “man of sorrow” in the garden—go, listen to His death shriek from the cross! and say, will you requite such grace with parsimony? will you set a price upon his blood? Had you all the world in your possession—did you combine in your person all the excellencies of a million of angels, His love would deserve the eternal devotion of the whole! and will you refuse to contribute a small portion

of your earthly substance, to diffuse His gospel, and glorify His grace? Oh, man, is this thy kindness to thy friend? He is now saying to every one of you—"Lovest thou me more than thy gold and thy silver? then consecrate thy gold to my cause, and thy silver to the salvation of the world!" Let your gratitude yield a liberal response. "Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; he that is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord."

The claims of the cause of missions are the claims of Religion. The spirit of liberality is the legitimate offspring of the Gospel. Christianity, wherever it is received, has a natural tendency to open and expand the heart. The real christian is like the Nile, overflowing its banks, and leaving a rich deposite on the neighboring lands. When the religion of Jesus existed in its greatest simplicity and purity, "the multitude of them that believed were of one heart, and one soul: neither said any of them that aught of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things common." They "looked not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others;" and "sought not their own profit, but the profit of many, that they might be saved."—They imitated to the utmost, their Master's diffusive goodness. They not only despised their worldly interests, and relinquished their individual rights to property, but even "took joyfully the spoiling of their goods," and "counted not their own lives dear to them." They toiled through tears and tribulation, night and day, to gather the wanderers into the fold of the Great Shepherd; and reckoned no sacrifice too painful—no sufferings too severe—no efforts too arduous—that could aid them in the accomplishment of this beloved object. You could not have convinced them that they were in danger of being too liberal, while a single individual of the human race remained unsaved. You could not have convinced them that they had any interest distinct from the interest of christianity, or that any other cause had claims equal to those of religion upon their beneficence and zeal. "The love of Christ constrained them;" glowing and circulating in their souls, like the life blood in their veins. They brought forth their wealth, and presented it to their Lord with the ardent devotion of an offering;

and if they "labored, working with their hands the things that are good," it was only that they might have the more to lay at His feet. The most enlarged designs were too small—the most costly sacrifices too cheap. They felt as if they must go forth into some boundless field of beneficence—as if they could move only in a sphere which knows no circumference. They knew that the gospel provision was co-extensive with the world's population; and could not rest till all should be sitting with them at the banquet of salvation. Though every accession to their number increased their joy, they felt that while any remained unblest their happiness must be incomplete. As if the benevolent command of Jesus was still sounding in their ears, they burned to "preach the gospel to every creature." Each individual was a flaming sacrifice, offering himself up in the fires of a self-consuming zeal for the salvation of the race. Hence the secret of their success, which has in all ages been a paradox to an unbelieving world: multitudes of Jews and Gentiles were soon taken in the toils of the gospel net, the Roman empire bowed her neck to the yoke of the Gallilean peasant, and the church exalted her glory over the dynasty of kings.

Here then is the first fundamental law of christianity, leading to the purest and noblest acts of beneficence and self-denial.—Search the records of antiquity—call up to mind the greatest philanthropists and patriots that ever lived; and see if you can find a disinterestedness and generosity equal to that which glowed in the apostles and their associates, influenced by the unsearchable riches of Christ. This principle is not confined to any particular period of the world, nor any particular exigency of the church; but is common to christians in all ages, and under all circumstances. How far do *we* possess the same spirit, and pursue the same practice? Do you claim a relationship to the first disciples? do you profess to have descended from them? Then be consistent: cast off your worldly spirit, and take up their fallen mantle, and no longer disgrace their excellent name, and the infinitely dearer name of Jesus!

"If any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of His." What is the spirit of Christ? Pure unbounded benevolence. He belonged to the *triumvirate* of heaven; but to gratify the ineffa-

ble yearnings of His infinite compassion. He abdicated His place in the government of the universe, "took upon Himself the form of a servant," and gave His whole existence to the unhappy creatures He came down to redeem: and for their sakes He welcomed each indignity, and invited each pang; moved by a self-consuming ardor to reach the cross—a holy impatience to be baptized with that baptism of blood. Who admires not such disinterested philanthropy? "We ought to walk as he also walked." The disposition which regards exclusively our own happiness and salvation, is diametrically opposed to the religion of the gospel. Mr. Summerfield once remarked, that the real christian would be willing to travel round the globe, if necessary, for the salvation of one single soul. What then shall we say of those, who "live in pleasure, and are wanton"—who "nourish their hearts as in a day of slaughter," and make no efforts for the conversion of the heathen—who sit like Dives in their mansion, "clothed in purple, and faring sumptuously;" while the cause of Christ lies like Lazarus at their gate, fed only with the "crumbs that fall from their table"—who consider their own ease, or pleasure, or emolument, as objects of primary importance; and after they have gratified all their vain desires, and pampered all their foolish appetites, are willing to give merely a very small portion of the surplus to the cause of missions; and then seem to feel as much self-complacency in having bestowed their mite, as if they had performed an act of piety for which nothing less than heaven would be an adequate reward! Look at their costly apparel—their expensive furniture—their general conformity to the world; and say, can these be the disciples of Him, whose whole life was one unbroken series of benevolent acts—one constant scene of suffering and self-denial, till it terminated upon the cross?

Alas! thousands profess the sacred name of christian, whose hearts never expanded to the warmth of charity—who shrink instinctively from the most distant prospect of sacrifice. They seem to consider the example of Christ as intended only for admiration, and not for imitation. They are like the Dead Sea—always receiving, and never imparting. They manifestly act on the principle of parting with as little as possible, and acquiring all they can. What care they for the souls of the heathen? In the

midst of a famishing race, they would establish a monopoly of the bread of life. Instead of communicating to others the revelation of "life and immortality," they would press the precious boon to their bosoms in their selfishness and their solitude, and steal to heaven alone. If "by their fruits ye may know them," they would have the Great Shepherd neglect the "ninety and nine" scattered and perilled upon the mountains, to attend to the one folded sheep—they would arrest the "mighty angel, flying through the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to them that dwell on the earth;" and confine him within the circle of their own contracted horizon. And thus they perpetually defraud God of His proper glory, the church of her promised prosperity, and the world of its purchased redemption.

And if these are guilty, alas for those who, rather than part with a little of their money, would have you call home your missionaries, and break up the institutions of christian benevolence, and stop the whole machinery set in motion for the conversion of the world! And are there none of this description? Verily, we have known men, who would at any time betray christianity for "thirty pieces of silver." We have known men, constantly at war with the missionary enterprise; whose presence in a charitable association is like an iceberg, freezing the very atmosphere, and repressing the warm current of benevolence. They "seek their own, and not the things which are Jesus Christ's." It is scarcely an hyperbole,—"Their life is one long sigh for wealth; they would coin their heart's blood into gold; they would sell their souls for gain!" To secure a little shining dust, they neglect every thing else;—

" Throw up their interest in both worlds,
First starved in this, then damned in that to come!"

Could they possibly share the future residence of the just, even before the throne of God, they would resemble Milton's description of Mammon in the celestial Jerusalem;—

" With looks and thoughts
Forever downward bent, admiring more
The riches of heaven's pavement—trodden gold—
Than aught divine or holy else enjoyed
In vision beatific!"

These never felt the mighty promptings of the christian spirit.—They “have no part in David, nor inheritance in the Son of Jesse.” “Come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” Distinguish yourselves as the followers of the primitive christians. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.” “Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; he that is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord.”

The claims of the cause of missions are the claims of INTEREST. It is a common error, resulting from the natural selfishness of the human heart,—that what we devote to charitable purposes is enjoyed solely by others—that the giver participates not in the benefits of the gift. The men of this world look upon every thing bestowed upon the missionary enterprise, as lost—thrown away, for which there will never be any adequate return. But the first christians considered their own welfare as inseperable from the prosperity of religion; and every genuine disciple of Jesus feels himself no less personally interested in his offering than those who are the immediate objects of his charity.

It is said that “The good man is satisfied from himself;” and, certainly, never do we rise above ourselves so much as when we are conscious of having contributed to the happiness of others. The act of beneficence is rewarded by the pleasure which it imparts—a pleasure of an elevated order, and too pure—too subtle—too refined—to be enjoyed by vulgar and unregenerate souls. What were the feelings of the great German astronomer, when he made his celebrated discovery! “Eighteen months ago, I saw the first ray of light—three months ago, I saw the day—a few days since, I saw the sun himself, of most admirable beauty! Nothing can restrain me! I yield to the sacred frenzy! I dare ingenuously confess that I have stolen the golden vessels of the Egyptians, and I will build of them a tabernacle to my God! If you pardon me, I rejoice—if you reproach me I can endure it! The die is thrown! I write a book to be read—whether by the present or by future generations—it matters not! It can wait for a reader a century, if God Himself could wait six thousand years for an observer of His works!” This is a most remarkable instance of pleasure in intellectual pursuits; but what, compared with the pleasures of

which we are speaking? Oh, the spirit of beneficence has in it a source of joy, which, if they but knew its preciousness, the rich would buy with all their substance, and kings would lay aside their sceptres to participate! Do you reply, that you were never conscious of any such satisfaction from the performance of a beneficent act? I answer, probably you never performed a beneficent act from proper motives. You may have given, but it has been either when your sensibility was "taken by surprise, or when a powerful appeal urged you to the duty, or when the example of others left you no alternative; or when your vanity was tempted by the prospect of being published as a donor. True benevolence is the spontaneous product of the love of God in the heart—of a clear discovery and a lively apprehension of the unspeakable condescension of Christ; and despises, alike, the tax which is reluctantly paid by fear, the bribe which is given to silence importunity, the sacrifice which is offered to a vain ostentation, and the price which is intended to purchase a place in the kingdom of heaven. What! is there no pleasure in the reflection that we are properly improving the gifts of Providence? no pleasure in the testimony of a good conscience that we please God? no pleasure in the idea of sharing the joys and dividing the sorrows of our fellow mortals? no pleasure in the thought of diffusing happiness around us, lighting with smiles "the human face divine," and causing many a desolate heart to leap and many a plaintive tongue to sing for joy. Can the philanthropist look upon the flowers with which he has decked this moral desert, and feel no satisfaction from the view? Oh, "it is more blessed"—far more blessed—"to give than to receive!" It is like the blessedness of Deity, who is always giving, and never receives. Taste the luxury of doing good, and you will regret that you began so late. Follow the example of the primitive christians, and you will experience a delight which angels might rejoice to participate—you will open to yourself a source of joy which shall continue to flow when the heavens shall be no more!

Nor is this all. "Liberality is the surest way to prosperity." "There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth wealth." The munificence of Abraham and Jacob and Job was rewarded with an enlargement of their riches; and the Jews, who as a nation gave

more to charitable and religious purposes than any other people, were far superior to all others in the amount of their possessions. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, so shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine." By devoting to the diffusion of the gospel a portion of the gifts of Providence, we "lend our money to the Lord, and that which we give will He pay us again." Thus we learn to trust in Him who feeds the ravens, and clothes the lillies of the field; and as the principle of benevolence is fostered by the practice, every other moral virtue is proportionally increased. The charitable man, therefore, while he is doing good to others, improves his own character. He rises above the contagion of selfishness, that disease which is spreading around him in those who regard not the glory of God; and spurning what is low and mean and sordid, he mingles with the purest and lovliest part of the creation. There is no school in which the practice of virtue may be learned with greater facility than in the exercises of charity. Those who are the most benevolent are making the most rapid improvement in that "holiness without which no man can see the Lord." They are separating themselves from the world. They are exercising the best of their regenerate faculties, and nerving themselves for still greater activity in the service of Christ. They are enlarging their spirits, and ennobling their nature, and identifying themselves with all that is great and good and happy in the Universe. They are a living example of the character of God, who is always opening to His creatures the fountains of blessedness which are perpetually springing up in His own ineffable nature. They imitate Jesus, that immaculate impersonation of benevolence, who came to bless mankind by turning them from their iniquities—who constantly "went about doing good,"

"Nor paused but for some pitying miracle,"

and found no resting place between the manger and the cross. And by following such a pattern, they gradually receive the impress of His celestial attributes, prepare themselves for the employments and the pleasures of angels, and secure an inheritance in that world where every vessel shall be filled with the glories of immortality.

He who knows best whom to bless, and how to bless, hath said, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." Our *charities*, as well as our *prayers*, "come up for a memorial before God." Their influence on our happiness is not bounded by time; and under the dispensation of grace, they are connected with an eternal reward. Hence the remark of Mr. Wesley:—"Though deeds of charity cannot, of themselves, secure our salvation; yet they afford us much peace of mind, and sweeten every earthly enjoyment; and the lack even of these may be the reason of God's withholding from us His saving grace and eternal life." Beneficence is the "art of embalming our property, and making it immortal." It is sending it before us into eternity—"laying up in store for ourselves a good foundation against the time to come." If we leave our treasure in Sodom, with Sodom it must be consumed; but by consecrating it to charitable purposes, we acquire an everlasting interest in it, and shall never cease to enjoy the benefits of its divine employment—we place it in the hands of Infinite Faithfulness for preservation and improvement; and not only have we the assurance that "He is able to keep that which we have committed to His trust," but His word is our unfailing security that He will repay us with interest in the great day of settlement.—We should not, therefore, regard it as a meritorious act in us to give, but we should consider it a vast condescension in Christ to receive our scanty offerings. Whatever we bestow, He employs not merely for His own glory, but also for our profit. It is the means by which He carries on a successful war with our infernal foes; and every farthing will go to the enhancement of our eternal reward. 'It is so much treasure laid up in heaven—so much seed destined to grow into a harvest of immortal blessedness.—Christ shall triumph over all his enemies, and obtain the empire of the universe; and those who have from proper motives aided in the glorious contest—whether by personal effort, or by liberal contribution—shall become joint heirs with Him in the possession of the kingdom, and share in the wealth and the honor and the felicity of the throne. The cause of Jesus is the only safe repository of your earthly substance—the great interest, wherein the rich may invest their abundance, and the poor deposite their mite, with the assurance that it shall be secure unto the judgment, and

constanaly augmenting to a vast and imperishable possession. What you consecrate here you save—what you withhold you lose. The christian philanthropist shall “receive an hundred fold in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.” He is wedding himself to infinite excellence and beauty and wealth. He is giving himself to God, and receiving God in return; so that all the divine resources become his—emphatically and forever his—his to the utmost possible degree in which he can enjoy them. We invite you to partake of these benefits. Come and share the purest pleasure in the universe! Come and secure the largest blessings of providence and of grace! Come and turn your gold and silver into never fading crowns upon your heads! “Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; he that is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord.”

The claims of the cause of missions are the claims of BENEVOLENCE.—Among christians, “no man liveth to himself.” One primary object of our existence is the benefit of others—an object which accords with the design of universal nature. For the benefit of others, the sun dispenses his beams; for the benefit of others, the clouds distil their showers; for the benefit of others, the fields put forth their verdure; for the benefit of others, the flowers diffuse their fragrance; for the benefit of others, the earth unlocks her treasures. “For the benefit of others,”—is the grand law inscribed by the hand of Jehovah on every part of the creation. It is read in the silvery stars—it is heard in the whispering winds—it is published by the voice of ocean. And shall we alone, of all the creatures of Omnipotence—shall we who are endued with reason, and “made but little lower than the angels”—shall we refuse to recognize this principle? Shall we, by living only to ourselves, and consuming the blessings of heaven upon our lusts, or consecrating them to the demon of avarice, make ourselves an anomaly in the universe—a barren rock in a fertile plain—a thorny bramble in a fruitful field—the very grave of God’s mercies—the very *arabia deserta* of the moral world? Let us act from a nobler impulse! Let us assert our proper dignity among the creatures of God! Let charity “have her perfect work,” and prompt you to deeds of liberality in behalf of the heathen!

Notwithstanding eighteen centuries have rolled away since the prelude of the gospel saluted the shepherds of Judea, there now remains more than two-thirds of the entire population of our globe who have never heard of the world's Restorer, and only two nations are efficiently putting forth their efforts for the salvation of the rest. "Darkness hath covered the earth, and gross darkness" is deepening and accumulating on "the people;" yet we who have long been walking in the light of the Divine countenance, have refused to enlighten them. The greater part of our own continent "lieth in wickedness." More than half of Europe is slumbering beneath the blighting influence of the Romish superstition. The vast Asiatic world, with the exception of a nominal christianity in the north, and a few Syrian churches and missionary stations twinkling amid the gloom in the south, is emphatically the "region of the shadow of death." Only a small part of Africa has been redeemed from idolatry, which is a "land of Goshen," where they have "light in their dwellings;" while over the rest of that immense continent, broods a moral darkness, impervious as that which once veiled her own Egypt, on that prolonged and fearful night when no man knew his brother.

Such is the condition of our world. The command of Christ remains unrepealed. Christians, you know what it is, and you have the means for carrying it extensively into effect. God has given you wealth, that you may give others the gospel; and if the gospel is the bread of life that is to feed a famishing race—the sovereign balm that is to heal the moral maladies which infect our nature—the only light that is to conduct man through the darkness of time to a clime of immortal blessedness and peace—can you have it, and the power of imparting it, and imparting to others will by no means impoverish yourselves, and still leave myriads of your fellow creatures in all the degradation of paganism—weltering in its pollutions, and agonized by its tortures? Where is your love for your brethren, if you can withhold your hand, and suffer them to perish? Where is your claim to a spark of human feeling, if, after having yourselves imbibed refreshing draughts from the cup of salvation, you refuse to hand it around among the dying within your reach? O, if you are men—if you are christians—look abroad upon vast neglected multitudes of your

species, whom it is Godlike to love, and benevolence to bless; and say, will you still conceal your talent in a napkin? will you still suffer your own temporal affairs—nay, will you still suffer your own soul's salvation to engross the whole of your attention, while the sins and the sorrows of a ruined race are thus appealing to your sympathies? If this is innocence, what is guilt? If this is venial negligence, what is aggravated criminality?

It is estimated that, of the six hundred millions who are destitute of the gospel, at least fifteen millions expire every year.—Thus, since the commencement of the christian era, million after million has plunged into eternity, in all the corruption and degradation of idolatry. How rapidly they pass away!

"And on the verge of that unknown abyss,"

how dark and dismal are their prospects! You may meet the "king of terrors" without dismay—you have a hope that triumphs over the grave; and sometimes he who has deferred the work of preparation till the very hour of his departure, even then casts his sinful soul on the bosom of immortal love, and becomes imparadised in the very jaws of death. But O, how different with the dying pagan! How sad and lonely is the death-couch over which no star-like brightness gleams—no cherub wings are hovering!—Behold the wasted sufferer, uncheered by the dawnings of immortality! He sees no Saviour lifted up for him; he hears no whisper in his soul—"to-day shalt thou be with me in Paradise!" No vivifying influence passes over his feverish brain; no holy gust of extatic joy fills and entrances his departing spirit; and he launches forth, without a helm to guide or a star to light him, on his returnless voyage!

The Hindoos believe in the transmigration of souls. They say that, after death, the spirit passes into the body of some other animal—a beast or a bird—a reptile or an insect; and thus from one to another, till, after thousands of changes, it may chance to become again the tenant of a human frame. A son of this cheerless doctrine was wrestling with the angel of death. As he saw himself about to plunge into that boundless unknown, he cried out—"What will become of me?" A Brahmin who stood by answer-

ed—" You will go into another body." " And where," said the dying man, " shall I go then?" " Into another," replied the Brahmin. " And where next?" " Why, into another, and after that another, and so on through thousands of millions." Darting across the whole period, as if it were but a moment—" But where," he exclaimed, " where shall I go last of all?" Paganism could not answer; and he expired agonizing under the awful inquiry.

This is but one example of a pagan death-bed. Thus helpless and hopeless, million after million, they are passing to the world of spirits. Their exit is emphatically " a leap in the dark." Not a ray gleams over the midnight of their opening graves, nor a whisper of consolation steals upon their spirits from out the fearful abyss. While we are discoursing so coolly of their wretched condition, hundreds are languishing in the last stages of mortality, with no correct ideas of a future life; and hundreds more are daily sacrificed in cruel sports, and cannibal feasts, and sanguinary wars; and hundreds more are bleeding at the shrines of idols, or writhing on the funeral pile of relatives, or struggling for life in the sacred waters of the Ganges. Scores have yielded up their trembling souls into the hands of an " Unknown God," since we came into this house. Several are dropping into eternity with every sentence that your speaker utters. Behold them shivering on the brink of two worlds! O, for heaven's sake, fly to their rescue! You have the power to pluck them from perdition; God hath bestowed on you the gospel, that you may impart it to them; and if you neglect to fulfil your trust, dare you meet them in the great assembly, when Jehovah " maketh inquisition for blood!"

You possess the bible. You value it more than all the wealth of the world. You will cling to it as your last refuge in the darkest peril of life; and press it to your bosom as your only hope in the utmost agony of death. For my own part, I find it difficult to select terms by which to express my estimation of its value.

" Though mine were the treasures of earth and sea,
And the stars themselves had flowers for me;"

I should esteem them all as dross in the comparison. And will you not contribute a few dollars to furnish others with a blessing

which you " prize above all price ?" Will you make no efforts—no sacrifices—for your unfortunate brethren ? Their souls are as precious as yours, and they are " perishing for lack of knowledge"—will you still debar them from the only fountain whence they can derive the waters of salvation ? O remember.—

" Who hath the Bible need not stray ;
But he who hath, and will not give,
That heavenly guide to all that live,
Himself shall lose the way!"

What would induce you to forego all the blessings of christianity, to become the wandering Arab, or the degraded Hottentot ? What would induce you to forsake the "fountain opened in the house of David for sin and uncleanness," to wash away your guilt in the waters of the Ganges ? What would induce you to exchange your entire condition for that of the heathen—your houses of religious worship, for their temples of abominable idols—your hope in Christ, your home in heaven ; for the shadowy elysium of the indian, or the sensual paradise of the Mahomedan ? Then, as you prize your privileges—as you profess to love your neighbor as yourself—as you would obey the sublime injunction, "do unto others as ye would they should do unto you"—contribute of your substance, "as God hath given ability," to send the gospel to the perishing ! Send them the gospel ; and they shall be "turned from darkness to light, and from the power of satan unto God." Send them the gospel ; and the foul and fiendish heart, where infernal passions riot in cannibal vengeance, shall be transformed into a glowing orb of love. Send them the gospel ; and the debased and groveling mind, that gropes in a tenfold midnight of ignorance and superstition, shall rise to its appropriate sphere in the great scale of intelligence—its original altitude in the communion of its Maker. Send them the gospel ; and the savage, who shelters himself from the angry tempest by burrowing like a brute in the earth, shall rear for his residence a palace like that of kings, whose scenes of social joy and domestic love shall form a little paradise ; and where accursed shrines stream with human gore, and blaze with human unction, the heart's pure incense shall go freshly up in the morning sacrifice ; "and the wilderness and the

solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose." Have you no offering for a work of such boundless sublimity? Will you give less to Christ, than the worldling to his pleasure, or the pagan to his idol, or the papist to his priest? Are you unwilling to reduce your expenditure—to retrench some of your superfluities—for the benefit of a cause that outweighs the interests of a material universe? "Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord; he that is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord."

These are the claims of missions. Let none imagine the cause unworthy of their notice. It is the cause of God; and woe to the worm of earth that spurns it with contempt, and refuseth to co-operate with his Maker! "Curse ye Meroz—curse ye bitterly the inhabitants thereof, because they came not to the help of the Lord—to the help of the Lord against the mighty!"

And let not the wealthy man, and the professional man, and the man of business, think the cause of missions beneath the dignity of their rank; nor excuse themselves from a participation in its interests, and a liberal contribution to its support, on account of the numerous and pressing duties of their respective stations.—Who furnished the most costly articles for building the tabernacle? "And the *rulers* brought onyx stones, and stones to be set for the ephod, and for the breast plate; and spices and oils, for the light, and for the anointing oil, and for the sweet incense." Here is an enterprise of far greater importance; and justice, and gratitude, and religion, and interest, and benevolence, are calling loudly for your offering. Will you press your earthly treasures to your hearts, and leave the world to perish? By withholding, you abuse the gifts of God, and expose yourselves to the charge of embezzlement and fraud. "He that loveth silver, shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase." "Trust not in uncertain riches;" they are shadowy and unsubstantial—the mere *mirage* of the world's desert, and always winged for flight. "Trust not in uncertain riches;" the pursuit of them is often attended with disappointment, the possession of them with mortification, and the separation from them with anguish. "Trust not in uncertain riches, but in the living God, who giveth you

richly all things to enjoy." "Be rich in good works—ready to distribute—willing to communicate." "With such sacrifices God is well pleased." The wealth of a Cæsar, or a Croesus, can never secure for you the Divine favor; and "if you have not charity, it shall profit you nothing." The miser of time must be the beggar of eternity. Oh, Mammon, what ruin hast thou wrought among the children of men! thou hast seared a thousand consciences, and kindled a thousand hells on earth, and sent a thousand souls to the unquenchable fire!

Nor let the other sex, whom our modern refinement has doomed to comparative silence and inaction in the church of Christ, suppose that they "have no part nor lot in the matter." Was the tabernacle completed without the aid of the Israelitish women? or did Moses and his Master refuse their co-operation? If they could not work in wood, and stone, and iron, and brass; they could spin, and weave, and knit, and sew. If they could not hew the pillars, they could prepare the curtains; and their offering was accepted with commendation, for it was presented with cheerfulness. "And all the women who were wise-hearted did spin with their hands; and brought that which they had spun, of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen." Is it said that the work of sustaining the missionary enterprise does not properly belong to ladies—that they are inadequate to its importance? We answer:—Woman's weakness is her strength; the peculiar sympathies of her nature fit her for achievements to which the other sex might aspire in vain; and prompted by piety or compassion, no work is too vast for her to accomplish—no obstacle or enemy too formidable for her to encounter and overcome. The missionary cause, moreover, is christian woman's appropriate sphere of action, where she appears in all her majesty of benevolence. Is she amiable, when she divides her last morsel with "those who are ready to perish"—when she seeks the children of affliction, and binds up bleeding hearts—when she bends like a blessing over the couch of sickness, and softens the death-pillow with her tears? how much more, when she flies to the relief of the sin-burdened soul, and points the anguish-stricken penitent to the "Lamb of God," and pours the glory of the gospel upon them that "dwell in the shadow of death!" "I cannot speak for Christ," said a martyr on his way to the stake, "but I

can die for Him;" and you, christian ladies, may not be able to follow your sisters to the "dark places of the earth," but you can give your influence and your money to aid them in the enterprise. Perhaps you say—"I am poor, and have but little to bestow."—But "the Lord loveth a cheerful giver," though the gift be small; and if presented with suitable feelings, regards the mite with as much complacency as the million. Jesus once "sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the rich cast in of their abundance unto the offerings of God;"—

"And lo, amid the pompous crowd
Of rich admirers, came an humble form—
A widow—meek as poverty doth make
Her children: with a look of sad content,
Her mite within the treasure-heap she threw;
Then, timidly as bashful twilight, stole
From out the temple; but her lowly gift
Was witnessed by an eye, whose mercy views
In *motives* all that consecrates a deed
To goodness; so He blessed the widow's mite,
Beyond the gifts abounding wealth bestowed!"

And now, at length, let us have an exhibition of zeal worthy the church of Christ! Let christians bestir themselves like angels, and ministers of the gospel like archangels strong! "Awake, awake! put on thy strength, O Zion! put on thy beautiful garments, O Jerusalem!" What! shall we slumber while the world is sinking? Jehovah has delegated to the church His moral omnipotence! It is in her power to carry a golden chain around the globe, and bind it fast to the throne of God! Awake to your work of love! An "eternal weight of glory" is before you—"a crown that fadeth not away;" and the testimony of the past, and the auspicious signs of the present, and the promises and predictions relative to the future, rise to stimulate you to action; and Jesus is still saying,—"Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature;" and the voices of all heaven are urging you on; and myriads of perishing heathen are calling for your help; and the deep wailings of eternity are cursing your delay!